



Sustainable development panel

09:30 to 11:45

15 November 2017

Present: Councillors Stonard (chair), Thomas (Va) (vice chair), Coleshill (substitute for Councillor Brociek-Coulton), Grahame, Jackson, Lubbock, Maguire (substitute for Councillor Davis) and Malik

Apologies: Councillors Brociek-Coulton and Davis

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 13 September 2017, subject to item 6 (below), Public Consultation on Draft River Wensum Strategy, third paragraph, first sentence amending it to accurately reflect the views of the Green Party Group by deleting:

“During discussion, Councillors Grahame and Jackson advised the panel that the Green Party group considered that the focus of the strategy should be on the environmental quality of the River Wensum and its biodiversity rather than a vision of it as an economic and leisure/tourism asset.”

and to replace it with the following sentence (amendments shown in italics):

“During discussion, Councillors Grahame and Jackson advised the panel that the Green Party group considered *that there should be more focus on the environmental quality of the River Wensum* and its biodiversity, *within the strategy*, rather than *primarily focusing on* it as an economic and leisure/tourism asset.”

3. Greater Norwich Local Plan Progress Update

The chair introduced the report and explained that members had no powers to amend the Regulation 18 consultation document but could make comments for consideration at the meeting of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership meeting on 20 November 2017. The director of regeneration and development suggested that when considering the draft consultation document members considered whether the questions in the consultation were the right ones.

The head of planning services presented the report, and together with the Greater Norwich Local Plan manager, referred to the report and answered members' questions.

During discussion the head of planning services explained the impact of the government's emerging methodology (Right Homes for Right Places) for assessing housing need and referred to the formal council response approved by cabinet at its meeting on 8 November 2017. Norfolk as a whole was not adversely affected by the application of this national methodology with lower figures being suggested for the urban areas, Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, and a higher allocation for the rural areas than in the Greater Norwich strategic housing market assessment. Members also discussed the 10 per cent buffer and windfall housing allocations and expressed concern that housing need was delivered. Housing delivery was 70 per cent which was in line with national averages. The delivery of 7,200 homes was additional to current planning permissions and site allocations.

Discussion ensued on the importance of the Greater Norwich Policy Area for planning growth around the city centre and surrounding urban area. The panel considered whether question 29 in the consultation document was correct and that members of the public would realise what was meant. Housing needs differed between the city and surrounding areas. The city had a higher percentage of flatted units. Affordable housing needs in rural area differed from the urban area. In rural areas there was a 30 per cent need for shared equity with only 10 per cent required in the urban area. In the urban area there was a greater need for shared rental accommodation. Members were advised that the county council supported the principles of the Greater Norwich Policy Area.

The panel discussed the establishment of a baseline for housing need and noted the options for growth. The 7,200 homes was only a small fraction of the existing allocations and members were advised that the options were "not as stark" as it would appear. The difference between the growth options were 78 per cent of new homes around Norwich (Option 1) and 71 per cent (Option 4). The panel noted that the 10 per cent buffer was the level acceptable to South Norfolk Council and Broadland District Council and it was expected that windfall sites would come forward during the period of the plan to assist delivery.

A member asked about the government review of the Community Infrastructure Levy and was advised that the formal announcement was expected as part of the review of the National Planning Policy Framework rather than in the autumn budget statement. The GNLP manager said that the plan would be based on evidence and as robust as possible to meet challenges, such as Brexit, increasing interest rates and changes to legislation.

During discussion Councillor Maguire said that he considered that transport was an important aspect to the growth of the Greater Norwich Area but that the consultation document did not adequately address transport links with the city, London and Cambridge. There needed to be better rail transport links with the west. Members considered that paragraph 6.38 needed to be reworded for clarity to recognise the importance of strategic connectivity of rail connections to the plan area. Councillor Jackson expressed concern that the section on transport was based on car dependency and that the evidence was one sided. He considered that it was not ready for consultation. The GNLP manager referred to paragraph 6.47 and

explained that the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) was being reviewed in parallel to the GNLP process. Other members agreed that the text of paragraph 6.38 should be reviewed to include reference to strategic connectivity of rail connections to the plan area.

Discussion ensued on Option 4 and the proposal for village clusters. The head of planning services said that the option had been put forward by the rural councils who were seeking considerable growth. The proposal would need to be considered as part of the sustainable appraisal and would impact on the county council's supply of services. Members considered that this option would not be sustainable and that there would be few positive responses to questions 25 to 28 about the village cluster approach and that the questions were inconsistent with question 29.

Councillor Jackson said that he and the Green Group considered that the explanatory text in this section was misleading and not impartial. He considered that the questions assumed that decision for village clusters had been predetermined. A member pointed out that South Norfolk and Broadland District councils were under pressure to allocate sites for housing and that village clusters could be considered as saving dying villages, by grouping together remote rural villages. The panel noted that there was a hierarchy of options and that strategically there should be no problem in consulting on the village cluster approach. However the chair said that the concerns could be reported to the leader who could raise this with other members of the GNLP. Councillor Jackson suggested that the questions be amended so that questions 26 to 28 were incorporated into subsections of question 25.

The panel then considered the climate change section of the consultation document. Councillor Jackson said that it was unclear what the current approach to climate change was and that there should be an alternative option. This was tied into the approach on the transport section with the promotion of private car use and the environmental impact that this would have on air quality and carbon dioxide emissions. Councillor Lubbock referred to the NATS review and other members referred to national policies to address air quality measures, and pointed out that the plan needed to be based on evidence and robust enough for the future. The GNLP manager pointed out references in the text and policies in the Joint Core Strategy. The Green Group could respond to the consultation with its concerns. The chair said that there was an element of compromise in the plan and that the city council had to take a pragmatic approach.

RESOLVED to recommend to the leader and cabinet members representing the council on the Greater Norwich Development Partnership meeting on 20 November to consider the following changes to the Regulation 18 consultation document, to improve clarity, that:

- (1) an amendment be made to the paper so that it was changed from:

25. Do you favour the Village Cluster approach in option SH2?

26. What criteria should be used to define clusters?

27. Which specific villages could form clusters?

28. How could growth be allocated between villages within a cluster?

to:

**25. Do you favour the Village Cluster approach in option SH2?
and:**

- (a) What criteria should be used to define clusters?**
- (b) Which specific villages could form clusters?**
- (c) How could growth be allocated between villages within a cluster?**

(Subsequent questions would need to be renumbered accordingly);

- (2) paragraph 6.38 be reworded for clarification and to recognise the importance to strategic connectivity of rail connections to the plan as follows:

Strategic Transport Connections

6.38 Strategic transport connections are important to the local economy and growth. The recognition of and support for such improvements in the GNLP can be of considerable assistance when funding bids are being proposed, as well as being potentially necessary to support the scale of growth proposed. The GNLP will therefore include a policy on supporting strategic improvements. The wording of the strategic element of the current JCS policy will need updating to reflect recent progress on the NDR, recent Government funding commitments for improvements to the A47 and rail improvements planned as a result of the recent franchise announcements and to deliver “Norwich in 90”.

6.39 The Roads Investment Strategy has identified improvements at Blofield to North Burlingham, Thickthorn and Easton to East Tuddenham with these starting in 2020. A new nine year East Anglian rail franchise commenced in October 2016, this will deliver significant improvements to rail services including: more services and faster journeys across the network, including two 'Norwich in 90' trains each way per day, and Norwich to Cambridge services extended to Stansted Airport every hour. In addition, the policy will need to recognise that the county council has identified the Norwich Western Link as one of its infrastructure priorities. As it develops, the GNLP will reflect progress towards delivery of the scheme.

(Subsequent paragraphs would need to be renumbered accordingly.)